

# History of Psychiatry

<http://hpy.sagepub.com/>

---

## **Report on the Census of Hallucinations Society for Psychical Research: Chapter XII Death-coincidences**

*History of Psychiatry* 1994 5: 403  
DOI: 10.1177/0957154X9400501909

The online version of this article can be found at:  
<http://hpy.sagepub.com/content/5/19/403.citation>

---

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

**Additional services and information for *History of Psychiatry* can be found at:**

**Email Alerts:** <http://hpy.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

**Subscriptions:** <http://hpy.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

**Reprints:** <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

**Permissions:** <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

>> [Version of Record](#) - Sep 1, 1994

[What is This?](#)

# Report on the Census of Hallucinations Society for Psychical Research

## Chapter XII

### Death-coincidences

**I**n the preceding chapters we have had occasion to consider, in connection with the facts reported to us, various cases of hallucinations recognised in the ordinary scientific treatment of the subject. We now pass to examine the evidence for the operation of a cause not so recognised, namely, Telepathy. To put it otherwise, we pass from the study of merely subjective hallucinations, in order to concentrate our attention on those which appear to have a veridical character

By veridical hallucinations we mean those which, either from the ideas involved in them, or from the time at which they occur, or both, can only be accounted for on the hypothesis that impressions or impulses have reached the percipient's mind otherwise than through the recognised channels of sense.

As we have pointed out in Chapter I., a certain number of cases which would *primâ facie* appear to have this character would occur by chance, and merely be 'extraordinary coincidences' without significance; accordingly, from the point of view of psychical research, the most important object of a statistical enquiry like the present is to decide whether the number of *primâ facie* veridical cases is more than chance will account for or not. In the present and following chapters, we shall be chiefly engaged in examining this question, in the light of the evidence furnished by our Census.

The hallucinations which have a *primâ facie* claim to be regarded as veridical may be divided into three classes. The first is the class in which the hallucination coincides in time with an external event in such a way as to suggest a causal connection between them, – as when an apparition is seen by B at a time when A, at a distance, is trying telepathically to make him see one, or when the apparition of a dying person is seen at the time of his death. The second is the class in which some information previously unknown to the percipient is conveyed to him through the hallucination. The two classes often overlap, as when a hallucination coinciding in time with a death distinctly conveys the information that the death has occurred, or when an apparition represents some actual characteristics of the dress or appearance of the dying person which was unknown to the percipient. The third class

consists of 'collective' hallucinations; that is, hallucinations occurring simultaneously to two or more persons, which cannot be traced to sensory suggestion from the same external cause, and cannot be explained as transferred from one percipient to the other through suggestion by word or gesture.

In this and the next chapter we shall confine our attention to a selected portion of the first of these classes. This restriction is necessary, since, in order to ascertain whether there are veridical hallucinations which chance will not account for, we have to select a coincidence between two quite definite events, and see how often it would occur by chance, and how often it actually does occur. The coincidence most suited to our requirements occurs among veridical hallucinations of the first class, and is that of a recognised apparition occurring at the time of the death of the person represented by it – a kind of coincidence which has the further advantage of being far the most numerous in our collection.

We have further to define exactly what we mean by 'coinciding'. We propose to take the same limits of time as are adopted in *Phantasms of the Living* and to call an apparition 'coincidental' when it occurs on the same day as the death – that is, within twelve hours either before or after it.<sup>1</sup> The reason for selecting these particular limits is the convenience of calculation. We shall accordingly speak of a coincidence of this kind as a 'death-coincidence'. We propose in this chapter to discuss the death-coincidences reported to us, and in the next to consider whether they can be accounted for by chance.

The number of alleged death-coincidences (in the sense just defined) among the first-hand cases included in our Tables is 80, of which 70 were realistic apparitions, 6 incompletely developed apparitions, and 4 visions.<sup>2</sup> This does not include cases in which the death was known to the percipient when he saw the apparition (of which there are 7 within the prescribed time limit) – nor does it include a case in which the percipient was in the next room to the dying niece whose apparition she saw at the moment of death, since some sound may possibly have suggested that the death was taking place. Strictly speaking, these eight cases no doubt come within the definition of death-coincidences adopted, but it is obviously better to limit ourselves to cases in which the death was not known, because the knowledge – or rather the emotions attending it – might in some cases have been the cause of the hallucination, and in any case would be likely to influence its form.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [This, and subsequent footnotes, are in the original Report.] The explanation of the inclusion of apparitions seen after death, as a part of the evidence for telepathy, will be given in Chapter XVII.

<sup>2</sup> For an explanation of these terms, see pp. 50–1.

<sup>3</sup> We have also omitted 7 cases which may have been death-coincidences, but in which the percipients seem uncertain as to the closeness of the coincidence; and it should be mentioned that we have counted as one only, a death-coincidence in which two percipients included in the Census shared the experience . . .

Further, to avoid complication, we do not intend to use for purposes of calculation cases occurring to percipients who have experienced other hallucinations, some of which were, or may have been, apparitions of living persons, of which they have not reported to us the exact number; nor experiences of children under ten. Of the first of these classes there are 7, and of the second 8, death-coincidences. We do not exclude these cases because we think them to be telepathically caused. On the contrary, the experiences of percipients who have had frequent hallucinations which they believe to be veridical . . . require special consideration in estimating the whole evidence for telepathy. But in this chapter, we are considering a limited class of cases with a view to numerical calculation.

After making these reductions, we have 65 alleged death-coincidences to deal with. Before, however, we examine these coincidences in detail, there is another question to consider: – the question, namely, whether a disproportionate number of alleged death-coincidences has been introduced into our collection by collectors seeking after particular kinds of answers. The precautions taken to guard against this source of error, and its possible effect on the whole collection, have already been discussed (see pp. 57–60). We saw there that either the effect is insignificant, or the cases illegitimately introduced are balanced by those which from reserve or other causes are left out. But though Selection – as we have called it – has thus had little effect on the whole, it does not follow that it has not disproportionately affected death-coincidences. As before observed, it would affect hallucinations regarded as interesting more than others, and death-coincidences are so regarded. This is indicated by their being, as we shall presently show, better recollected than the average of hallucinations; and further evidence is afforded by the comparatively large proportion of such cases stated by our collectors to have been previously known to them, – for, generally speaking, cases thought interesting are those that will be talked of and therefore known. About 11½ per cent. of the recognised apparitions of living persons (including visions and incompletely developed hallucinations) in our collection are stated by the collectors to have been previously known to them, and it is a striking fact that not much less than half of these known cases – 22 out of 50 – are death-coincidences. In other words, about 25<sup>4</sup> per cent. of the death-coincidences are stated to have been previously known to the collectors, and only about 8 per cent. of all the other recognised apparitions of living persons.

This disproportion renders it practically certain that errors due to any desire of collectors to obtain affirmative answers will have disproportionately affected death-coincidences. We cannot estimate exactly the amount of error

---

<sup>4</sup> This number is calculated on all the alleged death-coincidences, including experiences under the age of 10, and those which were experienced by persons who have had unenumerated hallucinations, and also eight second-hand cases; in all 88 cases.

thus introduced: for, on the one hand, our returns as to answers known beforehand are incomplete, and on the other, answers known beforehand are by no means necessarily selected; they would often have been collected whether previously known or not. But we have obtained definite information with regard to a considerable number of cases, and, on the basis of this, we are able to form an approximate estimate of the influence of selection on the remainder.

Of the 65 first-hand death-coincidences with which we are now dealing, 19 were known beforehand to the collector, 26 were not known, and of the remaining 20 we have no adequate means of judging whether they were known or not. Of the 19 which were known beforehand, we have good ground in 5 (including 1 experience of the collector himself) for confidence that the percipients would have been asked the question in any case. In 3, on the other hand, we have evidence that they were specially selected. In the remaining 11, we have no reason to suspect them of having been selected, but we cannot feel sure that they were not. The possible influence of selection is therefore limited to 34 cases out of 65: the exact allowance to be made for it we propose to estimate at a later stage. Meanwhile the 3 cases known to be selected should, we think, be excluded at once . . .

Deducting these, we are left with 62 alleged death-coincidences, which must be considered in detail in order to judge how far their character as death-coincidences is established, and what proportion of them we ought to count. There are two questions to ask about each case. (1) Have we good reason to believe that the apparition really occurred within 12 hours of the death? (2) Have we good reason to believe that it was recognised before the death was known, and not merely, having been unrecognised at the time, assumed afterwards to have represented the decedent because of the coincidence?

Exaggeration of the closeness of coincidence may occur in two ways: (a) from a tendency of the memory to simplify the phenomenon by placing both the striking events on the one day (*cf. Phantasms of the Living*, Vol. I., pp. 140–142); and (b) from a mistake having from the first been made as to the date of one or other event. We have met with an example of the error occurring in each of these ways in the course of the present collection.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> In the first of the examples here referred to, the case was not an alleged death-coincidence in the sense we are now using the word, since the figure was not recognised. In the later version of the story, written in answer to the Census question and three or four years after the experience, the apparition is said to have occurred within twelve hours of the death (which was that of a stranger lodging in the same house as the percipient), and before the percipient had heard of it. We found, however, that we had in the archives of the Society an account at second-hand, but which we had good reason to regard as correct, of the same incident, written about a month after its occurrence. This account stated that the apparition was seen a week after the death. The other example referred to is No. 656.26, quoted on p. 370. Here the apparition occurred before the news of the death was received, but when the witness was examined, it became clear that the news must have taken considerably longer to travel than the interval between the hallucination and the receipt of the letter, and that the belief in the simultaneity of the two events probably arose from ignorance of this fact.

Of the second kind of error, by which an unrecognised figure is afterwards remembered as a recognised one, we have no proved instances; nor had Mr. Gurney when *Phantasms of the Living* was written. Still it is an error respecting which we ought to be on our guard.

The best guarantee against both kinds of exaggeration is a written note of the hallucination made before the death was known. Such a note is stated to have been made in only six cases, which we now proceed to quote. In only one of them has the note been preserved, and then in an ambiguous form, but in three others, there is evidence, independently of the percipient's memory, that the note was made at the time.

The cases are arranged in chronological order – the most recent one first – the dates being reckoned according to the interval between the experience and the time when the percipient answered the Census question. None of the six cases was known to the collector beforehand.

(425.12.) From Mr. S. Walker-Anderson.

Tickhill, near Bawtry, Yorks., June 12th, 1891.

‘An aunt of mine, who died in England last November, 1890 . . . appeared before me in Australia, and I knew before I received the letter of her death that she was dead. I took a note of [it] at the time, and found on comparing notes that she appeared to me the day she died – date, November 21st, 1890.’

Mrs. Anderson writes:-

February, 1892.

‘I remember perfectly well my husband telling me of the apparition of his aunt; he also made a note of the date, and when we had news of her death, I remember comparing the two dates.’

Professor Sidgwick, who had two interviews with Mr. Anderson, gives the following accounts, written from notes taken at the time:-

December 19th, 1891.

‘Yesterday afternoon I met Mr. S. Walker-Anderson and had some conversation with him about the apparition seen by him in Australia.

‘He told me that it occurred on the night of November 17th (not 21st, as given in the paper communicated), 1890. He had gone to bed early, 8.30 or a little later; and between 9 and 12 he woke up and saw the figure of his aunt, Mrs. P-, standing with her arms down near the foot of the bed at one side, dressed in an ordinary black dress such as he had seen her in many times. She looked older and stouter than when he last saw her three years before. She seemed to speak, i.e., he saw the lips move, though he heard no sound; and he seemed to catch that she meant ‘good-bye’. Then the figure gradually vanished. They had a lamp in the room.

He is convinced that he was fully awake. He was not anxious about her, having had no letters to say that she was seriously ill, though he knew she was not very well. She used to write to him about once in two months, and he to her somewhat oftener.

'In the early morning he told his wife, 'I have seen Aunt P- who said "good-bye"; I am sure she is dead; we will take a note.' So he put down on a piece of paper, 'I believe Aunt P- died on the 17th,' and put the paper in a drawer.<sup>6</sup> He knows it was before 12 o'clock that he had the vision, because he used to get up at midnight to give the child something. Then in due time an English paper gave the news of his aunt's death with date, November 17th. Afterwards a letter came from his mother with the same information; and when he came home he ascertained that his aunt had died about 11 a.m. on that day.

'He remembers distinctly that it was on a *Monday*; but he and his wife had disagreed about the day of the month. It was, I understood, ascertained to be the 17th, by ascertaining that to be the Monday. [November 17th, 1890, was a Monday.]

This was the only time he had had an apparition of this aunt. The figure seemed quite solid and lifelike. It lasted, say, 20 seconds. He sat up in bed and thought for a moment or two that it had been his aunt in the flesh. He did not wake his wife at once, but told her in the early morning.'

March, 20th, 1892.

'Yesterday I called on Mr. Anderson, and questioned him about the discrepancy of dates. He said that his mentioning the 21st was due to an accidental lapse of memory. Mrs. Anderson, whom I saw and questioned, said that she had always remembered the day as the 17th. She clearly remembered his speaking to her of his vision at breakfast next morning, and saying, 'I am perfectly sure Aunt P- is dead,' and adding, 'I will make a note of it.' She remembers that she made a note of it herself in a diary that she kept, and that after the letter arrived in December announcing his aunt's death, she referred to the diary and found it confirmed their recollection as to the coincidence of the dates.

'H. Sidgwick.'

We have verified the date of Mrs P-'s death.

Mr Anderson does not mention in what part of Australia he was then living, but Melbourne time is about 9 hours 40 minutes earlier than Greenwich, so that, if he was in about the same longitude as Melbourne, the death would have preceded the apparition by two or three hours.

This case was not known to the collector beforehand.

It will be noticed in the above case that the apparent saying of 'good-bye' by the figure amounted to an intimation of the death; so that the evidential character of the case depends on more than the mere coincidence.

---

<sup>6</sup> 'The paper, he told me, was destroyed when they left Australia. - H.S.'



★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The 26 [death-coincidences] given in this chapter seem to us, on the whole, the best evidentially. It is, of course, difficult to draw the line, and probably some of those omitted might be thought by others more impressive than some which we have included; but the evidential value of many of the unprinted cases is not very great. When, however, it is remembered that the 62 cases are simply all the cases which, in the answers to our circular of enquiry, have been reported to us as death-coincidences among the recognised visual phantasms, leaving out those only which belong to the classes specified on pp. 209–210, it will be obvious that their value as evidence must vary considerably. Some of the cases are very remote; others are vaguely and inadequately described; many are without corroboration or confirmation of any kind, the persons who could have given corroboration in many cases being dead, or having been lost sight of. That in some among so many the closeness of coincidence is exaggerated, we might safely assume *à priori*. But we now have to show that indirect evidence of such exaggeration is afforded by the distribution of the cases in time, since there is good reason for believing the remoter cases to be too numerous in proportion to the recent ones. [which issue is then discussed at some length]

On the whole, in view of the evidential defects of many of the cases, we are disposed, in order to be on the safe side, to accept a reduction to the extent above suggested, and to estimate the whole number of death-coincidences at 40, instead of 62. From this number we propose, for the purpose of calculating the probability of chance coincidence, to make a further reduction of 8, as a very ample allowance for the selection which, we must assume, may have occurred in some cases.

Before concluding this chapter, we must explain to what extent we have made the personal acquaintance of the percipients, and talked over their experiences with them, which it has been our wish to do as far as possible in veridical cases. Out of 62 percipients in the death-coincidences we are now considering, we have interviewed 21, and 3 others had been similarly questioned by Mr. Gurney. Of the others, 22 were practically inaccessible to us on account of residence abroad, 5 on various grounds refused to see us, 2 have apparently changed their address and cannot be got at; in 6 cases out of the remaining 9, it has not on the whole appeared to us worth making a troublesome journey to see the percipients, either because of the length of time since the incident, or because it was vaguely remembered, or for unavoidable reasons badly evidenced; finally (in 3 cases) we have thought the collectors' investigations sufficient.

The general result of the interviews we have had in these and other cases has been decidedly satisfactory, leading, in almost all cases, to a favourable



view of the carefulness and desire for accuracy of the witnesses. In 2 cases, a flaw in the evidence, which had not been observed by the witness, was detected, one . . . already referred to, reported as a death-coincidence, but proving to be an apparition after death, but before the death was known; and the other, which we have still counted as a death-coincidence, but where there is a discrepancy as to the day of the week. But, in most cases, the interview decidedly adds to the evidential value of the story, at least in the interviewer's own mind.

### Chapter XIII

#### Chance coincidences

We are now in a position to estimate the improbability that the death-coincidences are due to chance.

The fact that each of us only dies once, enables us to calculate definitely the probability that that death will coincide with any other given event, such as the recognised apparition of the dying person. Taking as a basis for calculation the average annual death-rate for England and Wales for the ten years 1881 to 1890, as given in the Registrar General's Report for 1890, namely 19.15 per thousand, we get as the probability that any one person taken at random would die on a given day, 19.15 in 365,000, or about 1 in 19,000. This, then, may be taken as the general probability that he will die on the day on which his apparition is seen and recognised, supposing that there is no causal connection between the apparition and the death. We ought therefore to find that out of 19,000 apparitions of living persons, or persons not more than 12 hours dead, one is a death-coincidence, – occurs, that is, on the day of the death of the person seen, and within 12 hours of the death on either side.

The number of apparitions of living persons (including persons not more than 12 hours dead, if they are not known to the percipient to be dead) in the present collection is 381; viz., 352 realistic apparitions, 20 cases, classed as incompletely developed, where the figure or portion of a human figure seen is recognised as representing a living acquaintance, and 9 visions in which a living acquaintance appears. But among the percipients in these cases there are some who have experienced more than one hallucination. When these are all specified and enumerated, no confusion in our numbers can, of course, arise, because each apparition of a recognised human being is counted among the 381. But the cases where our informants have experienced several

or many *unenumerated* hallucinations, some or all of which were – or at least may have been – apparitions of living persons, introduce an element of uncertainty into the number which would complicate the calculation of the proportion of coincidental to non-coincidental cases. For the purposes of the present discussion, therefore, it seemed best to omit them altogether.

There are 28 percipients who have had such unenumerated experiences among those whose experiences are included in the 381, and the number of cases to be cut out on their account is 31, of which 7 are death-coincidences, and were, as it will be remembered, omitted in estimating the death-coincidences in the last chapter. Omitting these 31 cases, our number becomes 350.

We now come to the most important correction we have to make – that for lapse of memory. It was shown in Chapter III. that the proportion of hallucinations (including perhaps doubtful hallucinations) which is forgotten or ignored is probably very large. If oblivion affected death-coincidences to the same extent that it affects the average of visual hallucinations, it would be unnecessary for us to take it into account – since the ratio of the two would not be altered by it. But this is not the case, – as is proved by the distribution in time of the alleged death-coincidences reported, and as might be assumed from the fact that the coincidence would itself impress the hallucination on the memory. Indeed, it is clear that the evidence before us does not entitle us to assume that any death-coincidences at all are forgotten. They may be, and the absence of any indication of it may be due to the withholding of recent cases, but we have no sufficient grounds for assuming this. The whole correction applied for oblivion ought, therefore, to be applied to the 350 recognised apparitions of living persons with which the death-coincidences are to be compared. What this correction should be, is not quite a simple question, as the discussion in Chapter III. showed. The conclusion there arrived at was that in order to form a fair estimate of the whole number of visual hallucinations occurring to persons over 10 years of age, we should multiply the number reported by 6.5, if we included what we there called ‘suspicious cases’, that is, experiences which must be regarded as doubtfully hallucinatory on certain specified grounds, but that the multiplier would be 4 if we excluded these suspicious cases from consideration. Now it is to be observed that such suspicious cases are particularly prevalent among the reported apparitions of living persons, so that, if we estimate the whole number of these by multiplying the reported number by 6.5, the proportion of trivial and doubtfully hallucinatory experiences will be even larger than with the visual hallucinations in general; whereas among the 62 death-coincidences discussed in the last chapter, there are only two cases of which the hallucinatory character is doubtful<sup>7</sup> on the grounds specified. This being

---

<sup>7</sup> Taking the three specified grounds of suspicion named at p. 64, viz., (a) the figure seen at some distance either out of doors or in a public room; (b) the figure seen passing outside the door of the

so, it is more correct to compare the death-coincidence with the estimated number of recognised hallucinations, omitting the suspicious cases on both sides; and this latter number we obtain, for the reasons given in Chapter III., by subtracting from the reported number 8 per cent. for experiences occurring under the age of ten, and multiplying the remainder by 4. The number of recognised apparitions thus obtained is 1,288, or, let us say, 1,300.

We concluded in the last chapter that, after making ample allowance for possible exaggeration and selection, it would be safe to reckon 32 death-coincidences. To be on the safe side, let us assume – what is very improbable – that the two suspicious cases are among the 32 and exclude them. We have the 30 death-coincidences in 1,300 cases, or about 1 in 43. But chance would, as we have seen, produce death-coincidences at the rate of 1 in 19,000 apparitions of recognised living persons, and 1 in 43 is equivalent to about 440 in 19,000, 440 times the most probable number. Or, looking at the matter in a different way, we should expect that if death-coincidences only occur by chance, it will require 30 times 19,000, or 570,000 apparitions of living persons, to produce 30 such coincidences, and of these we may assume that about a quarter, or 142,500 would be remembered. We should therefore expect to have to collect 142,500 cases instead of 350, in order to obtain by chance 30 death-coincidences.

If we include the suspicious cases, and accordingly multiply the reported number of cases by 6.5, we get about 1 death-coincidence in 65, *i.e.*, about 292 times the most probable number.

This is the case if we take, as we have done, death-coincidences to mean an apparition occurring on the same day as the death of the person seen; that is within 12 hours of the death. But as a matter of fact, the great majority of the coincidences are believed by the percipients to be closer than this, as may be seen by examining the 62 cases (or the 31 printed ones) discussed in the last chapter. The improbability of the apparition occurring by chance within an hour of the death is, of course, twelve times as great as that of its occurring within 12 hours of it.

We conclude therefore that the number of death-coincidences in our collection, if our estimate of them is accepted as fair, is not due to chance. This will not be maintained by anyone with the most elementary acquaintance with the doctrine of chances. The opponent of a telepathic or supernatural explanation must take one of three other lines of argument. He must either (1) maintain that the alleged coincidences are misrepresented as

---

room in which the percipient was, or seen inside the room when the percipient passed outside it; and (c) seen in a bad light and under circumstances not otherwise such as to exclude the possibility of mistake, we find in the first place that out of the 62, only 4 occurred out-of-doors at all, and of these only one comes under the category of 'seen at some distance.' Under head (b) there are none among the 62, and under head (c) we ought possibly to put one case, but not more.

such to a much larger extent than we have allowed for, or (2) that they have been sought after by the collectors, and illegitimately introduced into the collection to a much larger extent in proportion to non-coincidental cases than we have allowed for; or (3) admitting that the coincidences really exist in a proportion sufficient to prove a causal connection between the apparition and the death of the person seen, he may maintain that this connection is not telepathic, but consists in a condition favourable to hallucination being produced in the percipient in some normal way by the circumstances of the case.

The first of these lines of argument can only be met by reference to the evidence on which each case rests. This in 26 – or in fact 31 – cases is before the reader, and he must form his own estimate. We need only point out here that the evidence must break down in a wholesale way in order to destroy our argument. For the margin on the side against chance is very large, even one death-coincidence being more than we should be justified in expecting chance to produce in a collection ten times the size of ours.

As to the second line of argument, we have only to remind the reader that in 26 of the death-coincidences, of which 16 are printed in the last chapter, our collectors report that they had no previous knowledge of the percipient's experience. We may add that in 11 of these cases . . . we have – besides the marking of the returns in accordance with our instructions – the positive statement of the collector, confirmed in most cases by circumstances mentioned by him when questioned, that he did not know of the experience when the question was put to the percipient. The number of these cases is alone sufficient to destroy the argument for chance coincidence, and . . . we have strong ground for believing that in some of the cases in which it is known that the collector was aware of the experience, this knowledge had no influence on his selection of the informant.

The third line of argument – that death-coincidences really exist and are not due to chance, but that the causal connection between hallucination and death is not telepathic, – requires careful examination.

We saw in Chapter IX., that certain mental and physical states of the percipient are to some extent favourable to hallucinations, and there can be no doubt that the form of any hallucination that may occur is likely to be determined by the subject with which the mind of the percipient is occupied. If, therefore, any mental tension – whether it be anxiety, grief, awe, anxious alertness to act rightly in an emergency, or any other such psychological condition –, or any overwrought state of nerves be produced in the percipient by the dying person's state, it is proper to regard it as a possible cause of the hallucination and examine it accordingly. But the case can obviously only arise if the percipient is aware of the dying person's condition, and, whatever be the effect of emotion, telepathy will still have to be called in to explain the existence of at least 19 cases among the 62 death-coincidences of which 10 are included in the last chapter, in which it is positively stated, or clearly

implied, that the illness had not been heard of at all by the percipient at the time of the apparition. To these we may reasonably add those cases where though there was (or, at least, so far as we know, may have been) knowledge of illness, there was none of danger, and where it is expressly stated, or clearly implied, that there was no anxiety. Such are cases where the percipient either believes the illness to be trifling, or where it is a long chronic illness not known to be approaching a crisis, and where he cannot therefore be supposed to be emotionally affected. There are 18 in number, of which 6 are included in the last chapter. With them we may reckon No. 579.24, where the death was due to suicide, but where we cannot be sure that it was not preceded by illness, and No. 307.20, where there is no reason to suppose that there was more anxiety than is usual when our friends are on a voyage.

There remain 20 cases, of which 8 are included in the last chapter, in which the illness was known to be dangerous, or in which we cannot assume that this was not known, and 3 in which the percipient was otherwise more or less anxious or troubled about the decedent. The extent to which the anxiety or trouble really occupied the percipient's mind in these 23 cases varies considerably and is sometimes difficult to estimate. In some cases, the anxiety was clearly great. In others, the knowledge of the serious illness does not seem to have produced emotional anxiety in the percipient at all, on account of the absence of emotional relation between the percipient and the decedent; but though this makes the anxiety – if it can be called so – less important, it also makes a telepathic explanation less plausible, so that we had better consider together all the cases where there was knowledge of serious illness, whether this knowledge produced emotional anxiety or not, or where there is reason to think that the percipient's mind was specially occupied with the decedent.

The question before us is: granting that anxiety and other emotions, or concentration of the mind on particular persons, are causes of hallucinations representing the person exciting the state of mind, ought we to assume that where such a state, – let us say anxiety, – is present, it sufficiently accounts for a death-coincidence? It is clear that the answer must largely depend on the duration of the anxiety as compared with the interval between the hallucination and the death. If the anxiety remains much the same for several days, the hallucination will not occur on the day of the death, and at no other time during that period, without some reason other than the anxiety, and, similarly, if the anxiety is unchanged for several hours and the hallucination occurs within a few minutes of the death, the coincidence, if frequent, needs accounting for. There may, no doubt, be cases where a period of culmination of emotion or fatigue occurs at the time of death comparable in duration to the interval between death and hallucination, and when this is so, the subjective causation of the hallucination may be regarded as equally probable with the telepathic. But this does not happen to be the case in any of the

death-coincidences with which we are now concerned, and in our opinion, therefore, anxiety will not account for even those in our collection in which it was acute.<sup>8</sup>

It must be regarded as confirmatory of this view that, out of the 50 apparitions in the whole collection that occurred to our informants during anxiety (or presumable anxiety) of the percipient about the person whose figure was seen, 31<sup>9</sup> are reported to have coincided with the latter's death - a proportion which must be greatly in excess of the frequency with which anxiety is terminated by the death, and not by the recovery, of the person inspiring it. It is further significant that, of the remaining 19 cases, 11 occurred when the person seen proved to be on his death-bed, though he did not die within the 12 hours which we have taken as the limit for death-coincidences.<sup>10</sup>

The reader should bear in mind that we when we affirm telepathy to have operated in any particular case, we do not intend thereby to exclude the action of other causes and conditions, - such as those examined in Chapters IX and X. Indeed, the operation of other causes besides telepathy is sometimes obviously required to explain the bizarre forms occasionally taken by seemingly telepathic communications. It is therefore quite likely that anxiety, - with other things which direct the thoughts of the percipient to the agent, - may facilitate telepathic communication; but except in very special cases, of which we have none in the present collection, it will not by itself account for the coincidence of the hallucination with the death.

---

<sup>8</sup> The strongest instance of anxiety, is perhaps No. 407.2. The death had been hourly expected since the morning. From noon till evening, the percipient had watched by her dying cousin, and then had to return to her own house next door to rest, in preparation for her work next day as a teacher. Some time after she was in bed, she saw the figure of her cousin, at once got up and dressed, and, as she left the room, met the news that all was over.

<sup>9</sup> This includes 8 cases not reckoned in the 62 death-coincidences, because in 2 of them the percipient was, or may have been, aware that the death was actually at that moment taking place; in 3 the percipient either was under 10 years of age or had had unenumerated experiences; and the other 3 are the ones in which we have evidence pointing to special selection by the collectors.

<sup>10</sup> It is worth analysing the remaining 8 cases. Three of them occurred during the illness of the person seen, but we have no information as to whether the illness ended fatally or not. One coincided with a serious danger to the person seen, suggesting a possible telepathic explanation. Two are cases where the percipient was awaiting the arrival of the person seen. The anxiety was by no means acute in either case, and there was in both a slight element of coincidence, which makes the interpretation doubtful. In another, the percipient saw a friend, and states that he was anxious, but does not say on what subject. In the remaining case, the person whose phantasm was seen appears to have been in no exceptional condition at the time.